

BOLIVIAN JUNTA STILL IN CONTROL

The new military junta, headed by General Rene Barrientos, is managing to maintain a precarious hold on the reins of government by avoiding any actions which might drive certain political parties and powerful interest groups into open opposition. The junta's lack of qualified administrators is causing considerable confusion in the government's affairs.

Communist and pro-Communist supporters of former vice president Juan Lechin are making gains among urban labor and peasant organizations that were formerly controlled by Paz Estenssoro and the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR). In La Paz, construction workers, street vendors, factory workers, municipal employees, and flour mill unions have fallen under the domination of the Communists and Lechinists. The loyalties of the large railroad workers' federation and the teachers' federation are presently divided. In addition, a new peasant federation has been formed by Lechinist elements to absorb those peasants who used to be controlled by MNR.

Student organizations, heavily infiltrated by Communists and Lechinists, seized control of radio stations in La Paz and Cochabamba last week, apparently with the sanction of military authorities.

The junta's strategy, meanwhile, has been outlined by Minister of Economy Julio Sanjines Goitia. He says the regime recognizes its weakness, but that it is doing all it can to buy time until it is militarily strong enough to prevail in any armed conflict which might develop. A large increase in the size of the military is the cornerstone of this policy.

For tactical reasons, political parties, the students, miners, and labor groups continue to claim they support the junta. They too, however, are buying time in order to organize, strengthen their membership, and develop their strategy.

The primary objective of the Communist Party (PCB) is to infiltrate and work for a common front with Lechin's National Leftist Revolutionary Party (PRIN). By itself, the PCB poses no immediate threat to the junta. An alliance between the PCB and PRIN, however, would represent a concentration of manpower and weaponry which could seriously challenge the military for control of the government.

The junta so far has not been recognized as the government of Bolivia by any country. Venezuela and Costa Rica broke diplomatic relations with Bolivia last week, while most Latin American governments are maintaining a wait-and-see attitude. The Latins are primarily concerned about the stability of the junta, the maneuverings of extreme leftist elements, and the junta's plans for returning the country to civilian rule. Junta members talk of holding elections in six months to a year.

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